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DEPT PLEASE PASS TO AMBASSADOR FRANK WISNER

E.O. 12958:N/A

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SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR AMBASSADOR WISNER'S VISIT TO BELGRADE

REF: A. BELGRADE 1100, B. PRISTINA 593

11. (SBU) Ambassador Wisner,

Serbia's leaders, led by Prime Minister Kostunica, have prepared for the new round of Kosovo talks and the first visit of the negotiating troika by affirming their unity on Kosovo policy and by submitting their "rules" for the format and substance of the talks. In short, the GOS rejects independence and demands that the talks be without deadline, deal primarily with status and that any only the UNSC can make a final decision.

Belgrade now  
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12. (SBU) President Tadic and Prime Minister Kostunica agreed to form Serbia's current government in May after nearly four months of coalition talks. Mladjan Dinkic's G17 Plus is also part of the coalition. The deal left Kostunica as Prime Minister despite a much weaker electoral showing than Tadic's DS, along with his DSS party in control of the Interior Ministry, intelligence service (BIA) and a new Kosovo Ministry headed by his close advisor Slobodan Samardzic. Tadic's DS party received a majority of ministry seats including Defense, Foreign Affairs, Finance, and others. The coalition has made its Kosovo policy one of its "five principles" (along with European integration, ICTY cooperation, socio-economic development, and combating corruption/organized crime).

13. (SBU) The new coalition has acted quickly on both ICTY and Kosovo. Two ICTY indictees were arrested abroad (Djordjevic in Montenegro and Tolomir in Bosnia) within the first weeks (and just before a visit by ICTY prosecutor Del Ponte). Tadic and the DS-run ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs have tried to capitalize on the arrests as concrete proof that Serbia is both cooperating and ready to move closer to Europe.

14. (SBU) On Kosovo, Kostunica still runs the show. The new Kosovo Ministry was his idea, and his way of maintaining "coordinating" authority over Kosovo policy despite ceding key ministries such as Defense and Foreign Affairs to the DS. Kosovo Minister Samardzic is extremely close to Kostunica on Kosovo (and other issues) and was the PM's envoy to the UNOSK talks.

15. (SBU) Kostunica has declared victory over Kosovo publicly, citing both the withdrawal of a new UNSC resolution based on the Ahtisaari plan as well as Serbia's July 24 parliamentary approval of his Kosovo policy as the national position. He has also set the tone for Serbia's diplomatic campaign on Kosovo, which was largely fueled by anti-American rhetoric. Kostunica has also tried to isolate the USG from EU members on Kosovo policy. When the UNSC was considering a new resolution, Kostunica said (on Vitovdan, the commemoration of the Serb's iconic defeat by the Turks on Kosovo Polje in 1389) that there was "a battle for Kosovo between Serbia and U.S...between power and justice." His efforts and tactics have been unopposed -- both Tadic and Foreign Minister (DS and close Tadic ally) Vuk

Jeremic have not differed from Kostunica at all in public comments on Kosovo, calling its independence and the Ahtisaari plan as "unacceptable," and remaining silent throughout Kostunica's fiery, anti-U.S. rhetoric.

Serbia's "rules"

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16. (SBU) On August 3, the GOS submitted to Chiefs of Mission of Contact Group missions in Belgrade their "rules" for the new round of negotiations (ref a). The GOS requests direct talks, without time limits and without the Ahtisaari plan as a basis, in which Kosovo's status is the "primary issue" for discussion. The GOS also notes that "only the UNSC can enact relevant decisions" by the Troika.

Your meetings

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17. (SBU) These rules summarize Kostunica, Tadic and Jeremic's common position on Kosovo, these talks and their outcome. They will not view your visit to Belgrade as shuttle diplomacy, but rather an opportunity to formally present Serbia's position to the Troika, Contact Group and international community. In addition to the overarching themes that will be raised in the Troika context, we recommend you also clearly reiterate the message you passed to Tadic and Kostunica in your February 2007 visit warning against Belgrade undermining stability in Kosovo directly or via surrogates in the Kosovo Serb community. As summarized in ref b, there are increasingly worrying signs that the GOS is at best tacitly tolerating, and at worst actively encouraging unhelpful elements in Kosovo.

SIMMONS